



EEOC News

U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION
Seattle District Office

Federal Office Building
909 First Ave., Suite 400
Seattle, WA 98104-1061
(206)220-6883
TTY (206)220-6882
FAX (206)220-6911

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CONTACT: A. Luis Lucero, Jr.
(206) 220-6878
John F. Stanley
(206) 220-6896
TTY: (206) 220-6882

EEOC SUES RLS, INC., OWNER OF LOCAL "SEBO'S DO-IT CENTER," FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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Suit Charges Company With Abuse of Teenaged Cashiers

SEATTLE – Sebo's Do-It Center hardware store in Clinton, Wash., sexually harassed a group of female cashiers, who were in their teens when the harassment began, and forced one to quit as a result of the abuse, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit it has filed.

The EEOC's suit against Anacortes, Wash.-based RLS, Inc., which operates Sebo's, [Civil No. CV4 2066 M] in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington (Seattle), charges the company with violating Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The EEOC filed suit only after exhausting its conciliation efforts for a voluntary pre-litigation settlement. The lawsuit seeks monetary damages – including compensatory and punitive damages – for the sexual harassment victims and for the employee who was terminated involuntarily. The Commission also seeks injunctive relief, which typically would include future compliance monitoring, reporting to the Commission, and training for company managers and employees, among other things.

"Sexual harassment has long been unlawful," said Jeanette Leino, director of EEOC's Seattle District Office, which filed the suit. "We are dismayed that illegal conduct like this persists to the present and that a group of teenage females was victimized.

"Our efforts to redress discrimination in this case are consistent with the EEOC's *Youth@Work* initiative, which highlights the issues of discrimination facing teenagers," Leino added.

Regional Attorney A. Luis Lucero, Jr. added, "The involuntary termination is especially troubling. This employer created a work environment so intolerable that an employee had no choice but to leave."

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The EEOC's Seattle District Office has enforcement jurisdiction for Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska. In addition to enforcing Title VII, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin, EEOC enforces the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; the Equal Pay Act; Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits employment discrimination against people with disabilities in the private sector and state and local governments; prohibitions against discrimination affecting individuals with disabilities in the federal government; and sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Further information about the Commission is available on the agency's web site at www.eeoc.gov.

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